

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 151731Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0845
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05886

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, XF, JO
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION BETWEEN KING HUSSEIN AND UK PRIME
MINISTER CALLAGHAN

1. FCO ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY WEIR AND WHEELER'
ACTING HEAD OF NEAR EAST DEPT., BRIEFED EMBOFF ON HIGHLY
CONFIDENTIAL BASIS ON SUBSTANTIVE TALKS WHICH KING
HUSSEIN AND RIFAI HELD WITH PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN AND
WEIR ON APRIL 13, AS FOLLOWS:

2. ARAB-ISRAEL. HUSSEIN GAVE CALLAGHAN TENOR OF HIS
RECENT EXCHANGES WITH USG, AND SAID ISRAELI PROPOSAL TO
EXCHANGE AN END OF THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY FOR PARTIAL
ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IS "NOT ON". HUSSEIN SAID WE SHOULD
TACKLE THE MAIN PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIANS; THE
ISRAELIS OUGHT TO TALK TO THE PLO, AND IF THEY WILL NOT,
THEY WILL DESTROY THE POSITION OF THE MODERATES. RE
UNDOF, HUSSEIN THOUGHT THERE WAS A CHANCE OF RENEWAL.
HE EXPRESSED A HIGH OPINION OF ASSAD, AND THOUGHT HIS
ACTIONS VERY RATIONAL. HUSSEIN SAID THE SYRIANS WANT TO
KNOW WHAT THEY CAN GET IN EXCHANGE FOR AGREEING TO RE-
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NEWAL, AND RIFAI ADDED THAT AT PRESENT THE SYRIANS HOPE

TO GET ANY RENEWAL TIED TO PASSAGE OF A RESOLUTION SIMILAR TO THE ONE WHICH THE US VETOED IN JANUARY. HUSSEIN SPECULATED THAT IF UNDOF IS NOT RENEWED, SO FAR AS THE SYRIANS ARE CONCERNED THERE WILL BE NO IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES, BUT HE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT THE ISRAELIS MIGHT USE NON-RENEWAL AS A PRETEXT TO STRIKE. HUSSEIN SAID HE WOULD WELCOME A NEW US INITIATIVE, BUT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE USG TELL ASSAD WHAT IT HAS IN MIND. RIFAI THOUGHT IDEALLY COMMUNICATIONS WITH ASSAD OUGHT TO BE ON A PERSONAL PRESIDENT-TO-PRESIDENT BASIS, BUT HE RECOGNIZED THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARRANGING PERSONAL MEETINGS.

3. LEBANON. HUSSEIN SAID THE SITUATION IS STABILIZING BUT HE AND ASSAD ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC SINCE LEFT-WING INTRANSIGENCY COULD CHANGE THE WHOLE FACE OF LEBANON. EVEN IF A NEW PRESIDENT IS ELECTED, HUSSEIN ASKED, WHO WOULD KEEP LAW AND ORDER. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, WANT NO GREAT POLITICAL CHANGE IN LEBANON AND WANT IT TO REMAIN UNITED. HUSSEIN AND CALLAGHAN AGREED THAT THE SYRIANS HAD PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE MODERATING ROLE AND THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR A MULTI-ARAB FORCE WAS IMPRACTICAL.

4. WEST BANK. CALLAGHAN ASKED IF THE WEST BANK ELECTION RESULTS WOULD CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THE ISRAELIS. HUSSEIN SPECULATED THAT ISRAEL MIGHT HAVE DELIBERATELY PLANNED THE OUTCOME IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW WEST BANK LEADERSHIP TO DEAL WITH. THE BRITISH DID NOT AGREE WITH THIS HYPOTHESIS.

5. INTER-ARAB RELATIONS. HUSSEIN DOUBTED THAT THERE WOULD BE A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND EGYPT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BECAUSE OF THE DEPTH OF THE PERSONAL AND SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES. HUSSEIN WAS WORRIED ABOUT SADAT PROMISING MORE TO THE EGYPTIANS THAN HE COULD DELIVER. HUSSEIN WAS ALSO PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT KING KHALID WHO, HE ASSERTED, LACKS GRASP BUT IS NEVERTHELESS INTERFERING WITH ALL GOVERNMENT DECISIONS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO COMPLICATE AND SLOW UP GOVERNMENT BUSINESS. THIS ASSERTION SURPRISED WEIR.

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6. THE WEST AND THE SOVIET UNION. "LIKE THE SHAH", HUSSEIN AND RIFAI TALKED GLOOMILY ABOUT THE DECLINE OF THE WEST AND THOUGHT THAT SET-BACKS IN AREAS SUCH AS PORTUGAL, ANGOLA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA SHOWED THE WEST AND THE US HAVE LOST THEIR RESOLVE. CALLAGHAN ROBUSTLY DENIED THIS AND "BUCKED HUSSEIN UP."

7. HAWKS FOR JORDAN. RIFAI RAISED THE ISSUE OF HAWKS, ASSERTING, AS HE HAD TO THE LONDON TIMES (LONDON 5788).

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THAT SINCE THE COST MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE, THE SAUDIS WOULD NOT PAY AND JORDAN "MIGHT HAVE TO TURN TO THE RUSSIANS. CALLAGHAN SAID HE COULD NOT BELIEVE JORDAN WOULD DO THIS BECAUSE OF THE VERY SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS IT COULD HAVE ON JORDAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE US. THE JORDANIANS REPLIED THAT THEY COULD TAKE CARE OF THE US REPERCUSSIONS, TO WHICH CALLAGHAN REPLIED, IN EFFECT, "I WOULDN'T BET ON IT." HUSSEIN SAID JORDAN MUST REMAIN STRONG, AND IF A PALESTINIAN STATE IS CREATED IN THE /WEST BANK, JORDANIAN POWER MUST COUNTER-BALANCE IT. RIFAI THOUGHT THE US WOULD UNDERSTAND IF IT WAS MADE CLEAR THAT THERE HAD TO BE AN ARMS DEAL WITH THE SOVIET UNION BUT THAT IT WOULD BE CONFINED JUST TO THE AIR DEFENSE MISSILES. RIFAI ASKED IF THE BRITISH HAD A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE AIR DEFENSE MISSILE. CALLAGHAN REPLIED THAT THE BRITISH WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER SELLING THE RAPIER TO JORDAN, BUT HAVE NO WISH TO REPLACE THE US ARMS ROLE IN JORDAN;

HOWEVER, CERTAINLY THE UK WOULD PREFER THAT THE
JORDANIANS NOT TURN TO THE SOVIET UNION.

8. COMMENT: THE FCO BELIEVES THAT, BECAUSE OF THE
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PERSONAL AND HISTORICAL TIES BETWEEN BRITAIN AND THE
HASHEMITES, AS WELL AS BRITAIN'S NOW DETACHED ROLE,
HUSSEIN IS STILL PARTICULARLY RECEPTIVE TO OBJECTIVELY
GIVEN ADVICE FROM BRITISH STATESMEN.

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